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ABSTRACT

This paper presents the views of a member of the committee of the Council for Exceptional Children/Council on Education of the Deaf on professional standards. It addresses the professional challenges suggested by these new standards, including collaboration among university programs, state agencies, and local districts to establish compatible standards documents and application of these standards documents to the development of comprehensive state-of-the art teaching/learning plans. Other topics discussed include the assessment of student outcomes and qualitative teacher assessments; the collaboration among professionals with diverse viewpoints; the resolution of the controversy between English and American Sign Language instruction by using whichever communication method is most effective with a given student; and the development of the collaborative mission of the Council on Education of the Deaf. Analysis of the standards found that one-third of the 66 knowledge and skills statements made specific reference to teamwork or professional collaboration. Collaboration is seen as the ultimate challenge posed to the profession by the standards. (DB)

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CED Standards: Meeting Diverse Needs Through Collaboration

by

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In a recent interview, the author John Edgar Wideman said that "if you don't write your story, someone else will--and they might not get it right!" I feel that way about the revision of professional standards--if you and I don't get involved, we may ultimately find ourselves governed by an organization or agency that knows very little about what we do--or aspire to accomplish. That was one of the reasons why I agreed to participate in the CED-CEC joint standards revision process that began several years ago and culminated in the document that you may have seen in volume 141 of the American Annals of the Deaf or volume 17 of the Journal of Childhood Communication Disorders, a publication of CEC.

In thinking back on the task that was presented to the standards revision team, I am reminded of the story about a prominent physician who was called upon to provide a complete physical exam for a patient who complained of a variety of aches and pains. After a thorough and extensive examination, the doctor could find no apparent problems. He informed the patient that she was in top condition, gave her a clean bill of health and proceeded to send her on her way. The patient got up, walked toward the exit, extended her hand toward the door knob, and fell flat on her face--dead. The doctor, without missing a beat, said to the nurse, "Quick, pick her up and turn her around so it looks like she was just coming in!" Most of us here carry the title of doctor--we are involved in a profession that has suffered aches and pains--and we now have prescribed a set of standards which, we feel, can lead us into a healthy future. Or, like the so-called healthy patient, will our standards fall flat and die? The

answer to this question, for the most part, depends on decisions that we make at this meeting and at other meetings in the near future.

The American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Language (ACTFL) has been engaged in a national standards revision, also. They have published the results of this process in an informative and readable book entitled Standards for foreign language learning: Preparing for the 21st century (1996). In this book the authors take great care to clarify what a standards document **IS NOT and WILL NOT do**.

1. Standards do not describe the current state of education.
2. Standards will not be achieved overnight.
3. Standards are not a curriculum guide.
4. Standards will not provide solutions to all problems.
5. And a standards document is not a "stand-alone" document.

On the other hand, ACTFL suggests that national standards can be very useful. They **can** provide professional challenges.

1. Standards serve as a reflection of the best practice in the nation.
2. Standards suggest types of content and experience needed to enable students to achieve professional knowledge and skills.
3. Standards provide a gauge against which to measure change and progress.
4. And standards provide a channel to inform and influence others--such as state and local organizations and schools.

What are some of the professional challenges suggested by the revised CED-CEC standards document? What can we expect to accomplish with the implementation of these standards? Let's begin with an overview.

Figure 1 depicts potential relationships among national, state and local standards documents.

An obvious problem in our field is the fact that not all states, districts or schools have developed comprehensive standards documents for education of students who are deaf. As we move toward the 21st century, one of our first challenges as university professors is to collaborate with our state agencies to determine mutually compatible standards documents. When that is accomplished, the next task, of course, will be to collaborate with schools to develop comprehensive, state-of-the-art teaching/learning plans. Naturally, we will expect our graduates who are "out there in the field" to assist with this effort--to act as diplomatic agents for change. Wouldn't it be nice to visit a school where each and every classroom incorporates the best of current practice, consistently, with all students? Why not? As I often tell graduate students, if you can visualize change, you can achieve it! In fact, I think it is the responsibility of all of us to shake up the status quo and work toward changes which improve our profession.

Another challenge for us in the 21st century is to address the issue of outcomes. How will we assess our students so that we are really sure what they have gained from their time with us? And beyond that, how will graduates of our teacher preparation programs assess their own effectiveness as teachers?

Clearly we need to consider this challenge carefully, since effective assessment is closely tied to progress and innovation.

Figure 2. presents another area for consideration as we develop collaborative relationships across constituencies. Quantitative measures, although required by law in most schools, have not been very helpful in evaluation of teacher effectiveness or student outcomes. Prospective teachers of children who are deaf must be able to use qualitative (observational, ethnographic) strategies to evaluate not only the students, but themselves and each other. In my ideal classroom, video cameras will be standard issue so that teachers can review their own work, discuss it with peers, and seek professional input, as well as review student efforts and interactions. Many of you are involved with portfolio assessments and descriptive review protocols. In my conversations with you, you seem to feel that this approach to evaluation provides useful information about the strengths and weaknesses of your students. You can use this real-life information to adjust your lectures to the level of the students, fill in any perceived gaps, and make progress toward the realization of knowledge and skills as required by the CED standards. Others of you are still thinking about how this "call to assess outcomes" might be met in your own teacher prep. programs. One way to begin this process is through collaboration--in this organization--with other programs. The web page that Harold Johnson has set up is a way to get a dialogue started

As you may have noticed, none of the suggestions, so far, has been linked to philosophy. Effective implementation of standards and assessment of

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outcomes can and should be accomplished across philosophical boundaries. Often our discussions become mired in methodological debates and we are not able to move past that to a level of discussion which can assist all of us in achieving our mutual goal, which is the best possible preparation of teachers and ultimately the best possible educational options for children who are deaf. I have for the past two years been assigned to the SDSU President's office where I have the loosely interpreted title of Affirmative Action Coordinator. I have learned a lot in this job, however one fact has been extremely valuable to me as I meet with various groups of people to discuss the controversial topic of ethnic diversification. I have found that opponents of diversity are experts at holding their own ground and avoiding confrontation and change by moving a discussion as far away from the actual topic as possible, digressing to tangential issues, effectively and for prolonged periods of time. Basically, they win points by wearing out persons with a different opinion, confusing neutral participants, and avoiding the real issue--which is how we all can survive and live together in equity and harmony. Addressing that real issue would mean accepting the possibility of compromise, collaboration, and development of a new perspective on an old concept. That can be difficult to do, however the pay-off may be well worth the effort.

Speaking of Affirmative Action, you may have read about some of the challenges that have occurred recently in California. First there was Prop. 187 which tried to keep Mexicans and others from crossing the border into California--this despite the studies which prove that Mexican immigrants,

documented with green cards or not, are some of the most responsible workers in our state. Then there was Prop. 209 which intended to eliminate discrimination by eliminating Affirmative Action. That legislation is on hold as the courts try to determine whether or not it is constitutional. And, most recently, we have the controversy about Ebonics. As you may know, the Oakland School Board voted to accept Ebonics as a natural dialect of many of their African American students. It was suggested that all teachers respect, and to the degree possible, understand the home language(s) of their students. The premise was that if teachers accepted the communication of the children as valid, they might use this natural dialect as a bridge to achieve standard English fluency. In fact, the Ebonics program was based, in part, on the research of John R. Rickford, a linguistics professor at Stanford University, who cited studies which suggested that a "bridge system" can help students move from a particular dialect to a standard language. One study, in particular, described a four-month program with 500 Black students around the country. These students used Black dialect, a transitional reader and then a standard English text. They gained 6.2 months progress in 4 months, as compared to a control group of remedial reading students who gained only 1.6 months in 4 months--in other words, they fell behind as a result of the remedial reading program. According to Rickford, "People seem to be endorsing existing methods, but existing methods are not working" (Washington Post, January 13, 1997). This move toward acceptance of Ebonics in the schools was an attempt to ameliorate dismal statistics compiled by the Board which revealed that 64% of students

who repeat the same grade are Black. Black students have an average 1.8 GPA on a 4 point system, and of the Black males enrolled in Oakland schools, 29% do not attend school on a regular basis. Clearly the existing methods were not working. There was a need to do something different–to rethink and restructure the existing policies in the schools. The Linguistic Society of America endorsed the position of the Oakland School Board, calling the plan "linguistically and pedagogically sound," further stating that Black English or Ebonics is "systematic and rule-governed like all natural speech varieties." In the opinion of the LSA membership, the Oakland plan would help students master standard English. The American Speech-Language-Hearing Society (ASHA) also published a statement in support of Ebonics as a natural social dialect with its own lexicon, syntax, phonology and semantics. What happened next ? First of all, there was a strong reaction from some Hispanic educators. Questions were raised, such as: Who will pay for this? Will bilingual education funds be taken away from existing programs for bilingual students? Resource allocation became the priority rather than the support of human needs. Members of the African American community were not 100% behind the Ebonics decision either. Many of them, including Walter Williams an economics professor at George Mason University, expressed the fear that acceptance of Ebonics would dilute education for African American students and that they would never become proficient or literate in English. These students would have limited opportunities for higher education and employment. Critics of Ebonics say that a good education in Standard English

is the ticket out of the slums. Acceptance of Ebonics, they say, is just building a ghetto wall around Black students. Does all of this have a familiar ring? If you take a close look at the arguments for and against Ebonics, you will see an almost exact replication of the ASL / English controversy that continues to exist in our field.

Figure 3: Critics of Ebonics / Critics of ASL

Cultural and linguistic data to the contrary, there are schools and programs that cling to practices that fail to promote educational excellence rather than explore ways to achieve academic and vocational success for all students who are Deaf. If the majority of deaf children were able to read and write at a level commensurate with their cognitive potential, we could spend time in philosophical discussions about the ways in which we might agree to disagree, professionally. At this time, however, theoretical rhetoric is a luxury we cannot afford. You don't spend time deciding which hose to use when your house is on fire. You try them all and see which ones get the job done. The fact is that our students continue to be undereducated and underemployed. Raising the standards for the professionals who teach Deaf children is a step in the right direction. Providing opportunities for enhanced communication among Deaf, hearing and hard-of-hearing individuals could lead to some collaborative efforts which benefit all of us. We've tried arguing and taking immovable stances on issues of communication and education--that hasn't worked. The new standards open up the possibility for renewed, objective

dialogue among persons who may disagree and may accept, as valid, a variety of solutions to our educational dilemmas. Professional collaboration and ongoing professional dialogue are critical to the success of our profession–the success of children who are Deaf.

All of us would agree that the future of deaf students should not be left to chance. One of the ways in which we can ensure the best possible educational environment for all learners is to ensure that persons who hold teaching credentials are well prepared. Over the years, I have heard all too often the following statements: "What can CED do for schools?" or "CED doesn't do anything for schools." or "CED has no power to do anything for schools." My response to such statements is this: "YOU are CED!" CED is not a separate entity--it is a board which is made up of YOUR representatives. If you don't like what CED is doing--if you have suggestions for improvements--it is incumbent upon you to contact your CED representatives and engage in dialogue with them. They, in turn, have the responsibility to bring your concerns to the board where concerns and problems can be addressed and effective solutions determined. Nothing is accomplished at the complaint level. However, much can be accomplished when we collaborate to agree upon creative answers to some of the old problems which have lurked in the corners of our profession for years. CED is a unique entity--a collaborative board made up of representatives from all of our major professional organizations (ACEDHH, AGBell, ASDC, CAID, CEASD and NAD). It has as its mission the oversight of quality teacher preparation and effective educational programs.

Further, it is a body which can communicate and collaborate with other national organizations, for example CEC and ASHA, to further the cause of quality education for students who are deaf or hard-of-hearing. A couple of weeks ago, in a graduate seminar which I teach, we were discussing the dilemma of translation of English idioms into ASL and vice versa. One of the specific idioms which came up was "Don't throw the baby out with the bath water." (Have you ever tried to translate that one??) As I observed the students struggling to figure out the most accurate translation for that idiom, I caught glimpses of phrases such as, "What is most important? Don't destroy that." or "Keep the essence. Destroy the superficial." Those fragments of thoughts reminded me of the task we confronted when we began to revise the CED standards. We had to determine which aspects of the old document still made sense in today's world, which aspects were totally out of synch with contemporary education, and which new concepts should be included in a revised, state-of-the-art document. There was a need to address educational technology and multicultural issues, for example. Options for educational placement, parent collaboration, federal law, IEP and IFSP...and other issues were prime on our growing list of considerations. As we discussed these and other issues, it became apparent that the core of the document, quality educational services-the "baby" you might say--was still viable. The "bathwater"--all of the details which had flooded and drowned any reasonable consideration for effective implementation--needed to be thrown out and

replaced with fresh ideas from several sources. In other words, the need for collaboration became obvious.

If you analyze the revised CED standards for evidence of the need to prepare our future teachers to work in a collaborative environment, you will see that 14 of the knowledge statements and 8 of the skills statements make specific reference to teamwork or professional collaboration. That is, 22 (exactly one-third) of the 66 knowledge and skills statements make a direct connection between best practice and collaboration. By the way, I have not included in this number the statements which refer to cultural knowledge and skill, although one would assume that collaboration with diverse communities would be essential in that domain, as well. My point is that the new standards require us to step down from the pedestal of Super Teacher, take a look around at all of the disciplines which will assist us in the job of providing highest quality education for children who are deaf, and create an environment where we collaborate with others and accept the challenge of on-going personal growth as teacher-scholars. My own personal favorite among the 66 knowledge and skills statements is number 61: New teachers must have the " ability to seek out a process for acquiring the needed skills in modes/philosophies of education of students who are Deaf or Hard-of-hearing in which the individual was not prepared." Collaboration is our ultimate challenge! We as university professors cannot possibly prepare our students for every single challenge that they will face in their professional lives. We can, however, help them to develop positive attitudes toward collaboration--give them permission to admit

that they don't have all the answers and then show them how to build a support system that allows them to tap the resources of experts in a variety of related areas, from questions regarding communication issues to medical to vocational to social and beyond. As we progress in areas of collaboration, our students and their students will be the ultimate beneficiaries. The process, however, will not be easy. It is never easy to effect change or to shift an entrenched paradigm.

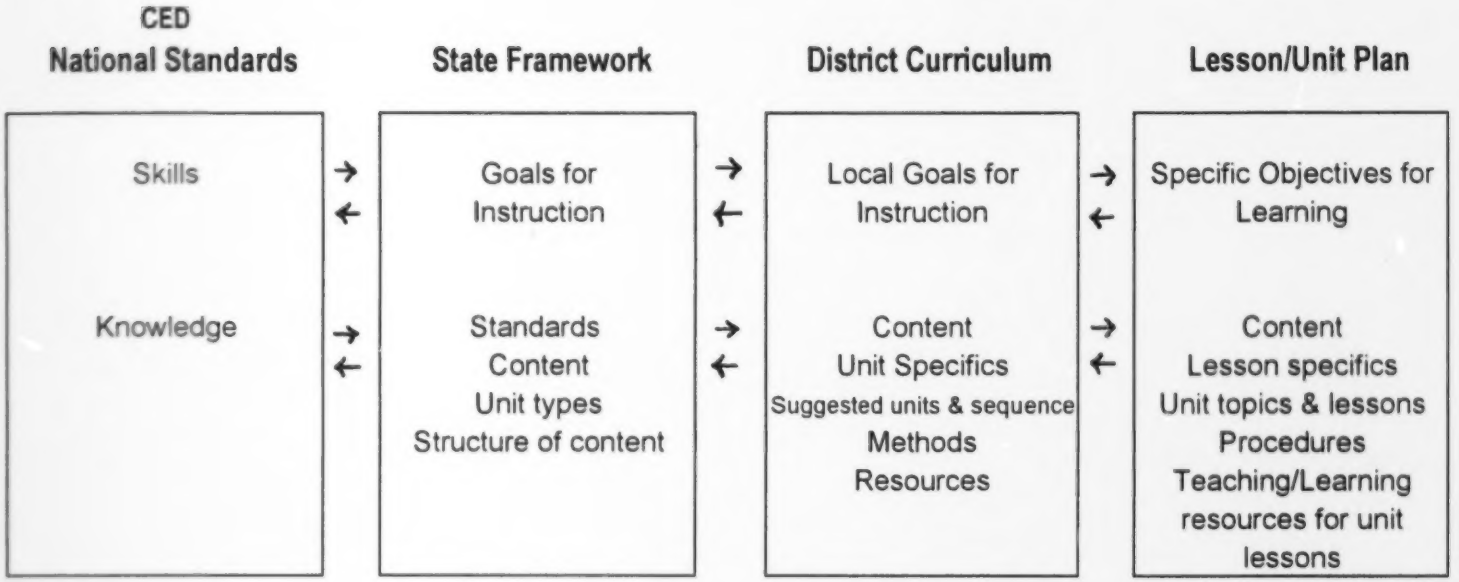
When I was asked for the title of this plenary talk, my first choice was "Standards: Taming the philosophical monster in the classroom." Catchy title, however I decided against it because someone else had come up with it first and I wouldn't want to be accused of plagiarism! The concept of the "philosophical monster" was described first by Kathe Jervis and Joseph McDonald in an article in the April, 1996 Phi Delta Kappan. This monster was a metphor for the reconciliation of child-focused (flexible, individualized) teaching with teaching according to a set of standards (rigid, theoretical); what McDonald has called the "reconciliation of head and heart." Jervis and McDonald are involved with the National Center for Restructuring Education, Schools and Teaching at Columbia University Teachers College. Some of the questions that they raise include: How do teacher's standards translate to student outcomes? What performance information do we get form standards? Is it possible for teachers to "stand back from the complexities of their jobs and reflect" on issues of assessment and outcomes? Some of the potential answers to these questions

revolve around the implementation of descriptive reviews of students, portfolio meetings and group scoring, team collaboration and networking.

Further description of the innovative work of the NCRE can be found in a recent book by Kathe Jervis entitled Eyes on the child: Three portfolio stories, Teachers College Press, 1996. The book, itself, is fascinating and the appendices contain valuable perspective and principles related to school reform. I would like to see research in teacher preparation and education of children who are deaf follow this innovative, qualitative and pragmatic approach.

There is much to do in the field of education and there always will be much more to do. Collaboration, as reflected in the CED standards document, can help us to accomplish much more than we could with individual efforts alone.

Figure 1. The Relationships Among National, State, and Local Standards Documents



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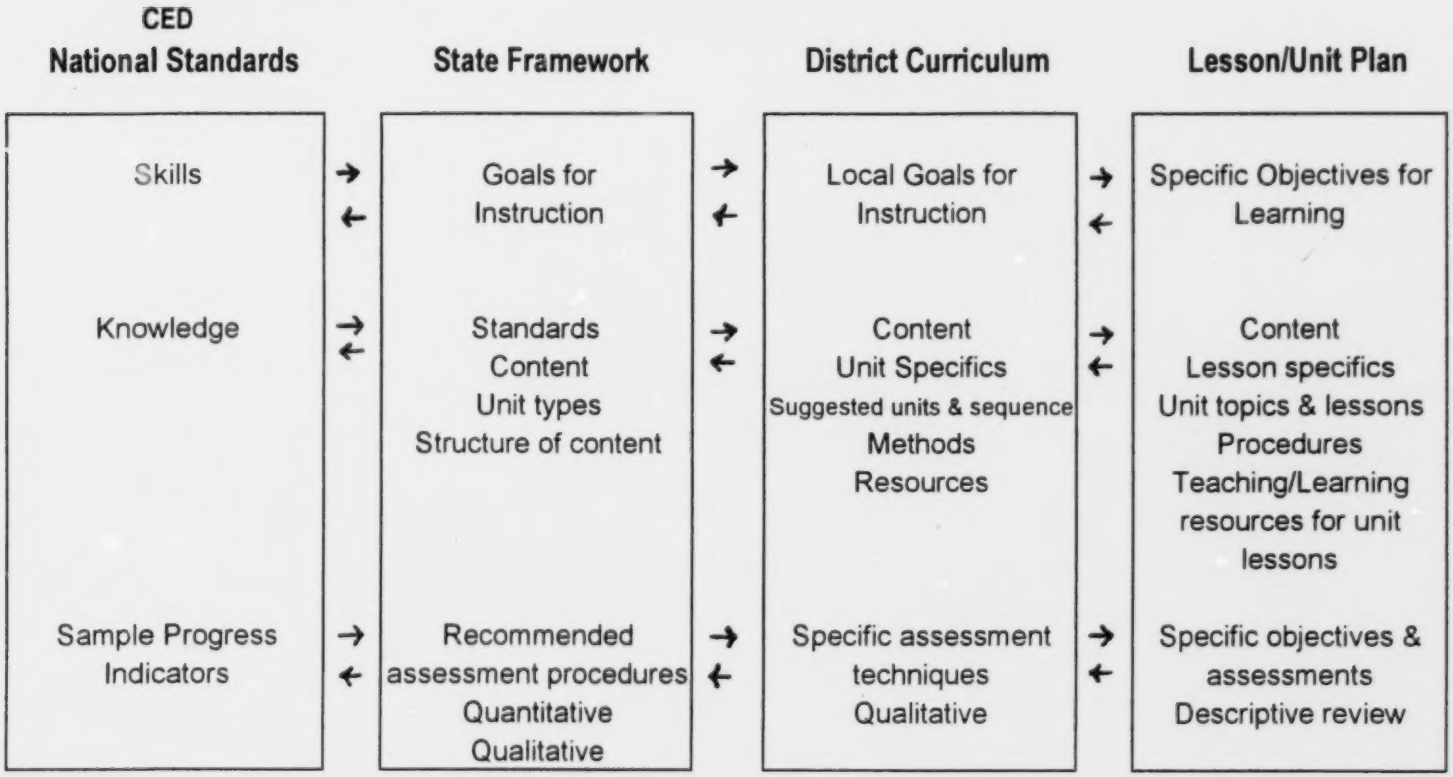
National Art Education Association, 1995

Figure 2. The Relationships Among National, State, and Local Standards Documents: Assessment Component



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CRITICS OF EBONICS	CRITICS OF ASL
1. AFRO-CENTRIC	1. DEAF POWER
2. STUDENTS WON'T LEARN ENGLISH	2. DITTO
3. STUDENTS WON'T BE COMPETITIVE IN THE JOB MARKET	3. DITTO
4. STUDENTS WON'T ASSIMILATE INTO THE MAJORITY CULTURE	4. DITTO
5. STUDENTS WILL FAIL ACADEMICALLY	5. DITTO